

The Penguin Modern Painters

EDWARD BAWDEN

754.642B
B35
R



20199207

J. M. RICHARDS

EDWARD BAWDEN

PENGUIN BOOKS



Withdrawn

UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
DEPARTMENT OF EXTRA-MURAL STUDIES

THE PENGUIN MODERN PAINTERS

Editor Sir Kenneth Clark

First Published 1946

BIB. REC. NO.	B18923814
DATE REC'D	24 FEB 1968
CLASS NO.	754.6425
AUTHOR NO.	835-8

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

Text pages printed at The Baynard Press, London

Colour Plates by John Swain & Son, Ltd., Barnet

Published by

Penguin Books Limited

Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

245 Fifth Avenue, New York, U.S.A.

754.642

COLOUR PLATES

- Plate 1 CATHOLIC CHURCH AT ADDIS ABABA (1941), 19×22 , *water-colour* ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 3 DERELICT CAB (1933), $19 \times 23\frac{3}{4}$, *water-colour* ; owned by Gilbert Spencer, Esq.
- Plate 5 LITTLE SAMPFORD CHURCH (1933), $18 \times 22\frac{3}{4}$, *water-colour* ; owned by Miss Louisa Pullar
- Plate 7 NEWHAVEN HARBOUR (1936), $18 \times 22\frac{3}{4}$, *water-colour* ; owned by F. Pickering Walker, Esq.
- Plate 9 NEAR WEATHERSFIELD (1935), $17\frac{1}{2} \times 36\frac{1}{2}$, *water-colour* ; owned by Francis Meynell, Esq.
- Plate 11 FEBRUARY 2 P.M. (1936), $18 \times 22\frac{3}{4}$, *water-colour* ; owned by Miss Nora C. Jolliffe
- Plate 13 CORNFIELD (1937), $18 \times 22\frac{3}{4}$, *water-colour* ; owned by Mrs. Beryl Sinclair
- Plate 15 ESSEX LANDSCAPE (1936), $18 \times 22\frac{3}{4}$, *water-colour* ; owned by Osborne Robinson, Esq.
- Plate 17 SUDAN DEFENCE FORCE, TRAINING CENTRE, OMDURMAN (1940), 19×23 , *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 19 AT GALLABAT ON THE SUDAN-ETHIOPIAN BORDER, GUNS FIRING ON METEMMA (1940), 19×22 , *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 21 GUBBA, THE SUDAN ; A BURNT TURL IN THE DEVASTATED VILLAGE (1941), 19×22 , *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 23 THE PALACE OF THE EMPEROR MENELIK (THE OLD GEBBI) AT ADDIS ABABA (1941), 19×45 , *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 25 BENGASI : SUNKEN SHIPPING IN THE HARBOUR (1942), 19×45 , *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 27 TOBRUK : THE HARBOUR (1942), 19×45 , *water-colour* ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 29 CATTLE MARKET, BRAINTREE (1937), 20×26 , *linoleum cut* ; owned by Contemporary Lithographs, Ltd.
- Plate 31 POSTER : KEW GARDENS (1937), 25×40 , *linoleum cut* ; owned by London Passenger Transport Board

BLACK AND WHITE PLATES

- Plate 2 ST. GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL, ADDIS ABABA (1941), 19×22 , *water-colour* ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 4 SHAIKH HAJI FARHUD AL-FANDI, IRAQ (1944), $17\frac{1}{2} \times 22$, *water-colour* ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 6 A CREEK SCENE IN SHAIKH HAJI FARHUD'S SECTION OF THE HATCHAM TRIBE, IRAQ (1944), $17\frac{1}{2} \times 22$, *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 8 INTERIOR OF SHAIKH MUZHIR AL-GASSID'S MUDHIF, IRAQ (1944), $17\frac{1}{2} \times 22$, *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 10 SHAIKH HAJI MAQTUF AND ONE OF HIS BROTHERS, IRAQ (1944), $17\frac{1}{2} \times 22$, *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 12 ENTRANCE TO THE CARPET-SELLERS' BAZAAR AT BAGHDAD (1943), $17\frac{1}{2} \times 22$, *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 14 A STREET IN JIDDA, SAUDI ARABIA (1944), $17\frac{1}{2} \times 22$, *water-colour* ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 16 THE CAMEL MARKET AND THE RUINS OF THE PALACE OF IBN RASCHID AT HAIL, SAUDI ARABIA (1944), $17\frac{1}{2} \times 22$,
water-colour ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 18 SALEM AND HIS SON ABDULLAH, HAIL, SAUDI ARABIA (1944), $17\frac{1}{2} \times 22$, *water-colour* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 20 RESCUED BRITISH SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN AND MERCHANT SEAMEN ON THE FRENCH WARSHIP 'GLOIRE' (1943),
 19×22 , *water-colour* ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 22 SGT. BAITISI, BECHUANA PIONEER COY., LEBANON (1942), 19×22 , *pen and wash* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 24 PTE. G. F. DUNNING, R.A.S.C., COLCHESTER (1943), 19×22 , *pen and wash* ;
owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 26 PTE. R. WYARD, R.A.M.C., COLCHESTER (1943), 19×22 , *pen and wash* ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 28 HASSAN MIRZA, BAGHDAD (1943), $15 \times 18\frac{1}{2}$, *water-colour* ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee
- Plate 30 DECORATION FOR THE DINING ROOM, INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CLUB (1937), *wax medium*
- Plate 32 YUSIF HAIM SHAMELL, BAGHDAD (1943), $15 \times 18\frac{1}{2}$, *water-colour* ; owned by War Artists' Advisory Committee

EDWARD BAWDEN

EDWARD BAWDEN belongs to the generation of artists that grew up between the two wars. He went to his first full-time art school in 1919 and to the Royal College of Art in 1922. Six years later he was given his first important commission (to paint the walls of the Refreshment Room at Morley College) and six years after that, in 1934, he held his first one-man show. A further interval of six years brings us to 1940 and finds Bawden enrolled as an official War Artist, serving with the British Army in France and sharing its escape from Dunkirk. It also brings us to his rise to maturity as a painter, which explains why half the pictures chosen for reproduction in this book represent his work as a War Artist, although they are the product of only five out of the dozen or so years during which he has had a growing reputation.

Before the war, Bawden's reputation was considerable, but among a wide public it chiefly rested on his witty line drawings, notably his series of advertisements for Shell. Most of those who admired his paintings looked on him as inseparable from that Essex countryside which he

had made his own, and therefore—however sensitive and personal his interpretation of it—as inevitably bound by the limitations of the regional landscape-painter. If they judged him by his work they could, indeed, hardly have anticipated that it would prove possible to transplant so apparently localized a talent. But they did not know that it was not dependence on a regional background that kept him tied to Essex; on the contrary, it was his remarkable self-sufficiency, which allowed him to forgo the constant stimulus of new surroundings essential to some temperaments. It suited him to work within the confining hedgerows of pastoral Essex, but when circumstances translated him to the wider horizons of African desert and jungle, this same self-sufficiency allowed him to make himself equally at home. Armed with a mastery of technique cultivated through years of painstaking experiment, he could greet the strangest of new worlds with complete assurance and control, and evoke new power and vision from his own resources.

Before it is possible to discuss Bawden's work in any detail, it is necessary to outline his career more fully, for the salient qualities of his art are best



observed in the course of their development. He was born on March 10th, 1903, at Braintree, Essex, where his parents were prosperous tradespeople. He was their only child, and was said by his mother to be "difficult to rear". He was educated at first in the local High School, and then at the Quaker School at Saffron Walden. Here his talent for drawing was noted, and the school persuaded his father to allow him to go for one day every week to Cambridge Municipal Art School. When he left the Saffron Walden school at the age of sixteen, he went to Cambridge Art School as a whole-time student and stayed there two years, living an industrious and markedly frugal life, lodged by his parents with a suitable chapel-going family. From Cambridge he won a Royal Exhibition to the Royal College of Art at South Kensington. The award of these Exhibitions is based on the Board of Education's Industrial Design examination, and the subjects in which Bawden took the examination were writing and illuminating.

So far his story is not very different from that of any promising and moderately fortunate art student, though his way of life provided little enough ready-made material for his imagination to feed on, and his self-reliance was therefore early in evidence; so was his exceptional capacity for taking pains. What is also significant is his choice of subjects in which to specialize: writing and

illuminating. These are subjects requiring control rather than dash; they are always subservient to the discipline of their materials, tools and purpose, and their practice is inseparable from the tradition of craftsmanship on which their slow evolution has been based. Here may already be seen the germ of Bawden's interest in typography and book-making, of the calligraphic quality of much of his draughtsmanship and, perhaps, of his unfailing mastery over the tools and materials he uses.

At the Royal College of Art he was a hard-working student, prolific in museum studies, made with the most painstaking care, of heraldry, manuscripts, cotton prints and many other subjects that took his fancy. In his own designs, great originality had yet to show itself. He was one of the first of this generation to take pleasure in Victorian ornaments—wax fruits in glass cases, and such-like—long before it became the vogue to cultivate an admiration for them. His liking for such things was quite genuine. From an early date he also had, as one would expect, a fondness for illustrated books, particularly Victorian ones. Like many young draughtsmen, he was an enthusiastic admirer of Aubrey Beardsley, and, after he had outgrown this, of Edward Lear and Dicky Doyle. His admiration for these last two has never diminished. It was in book-illustration that he took his diploma in 1925, although his actual

diploma work looked like a design for a pack of playing-cards.

For a long time he was an unwilling traveller, as insular in his ways as anyone with his active, curious mind could be, and anyone so lacking in the bigotry that often goes with insularity. For him insularity has never been a shield from the disquieting and unfamiliar (witness his recent tireless journey all through the Middle East), but the logical result of his own knowledge of what things interested him at a given moment.

Bawden had now to launch himself on a world in which earning a living is a chancy business for even the most brilliant and hard-working young artist. His temperament was not the kind that usually makes for early success. He was neither thick-skinned nor pushful; in fact, he was so self-conscious that he disliked going into shops or travelling in buses—from which latter peculiarity, or rather from the pedestrian habits consequent on it, derives his intimate knowledge of the by-ways of London. But to counterbalance these, there was his remarkable self-sufficiency, already referred to, and a detached sense of human absurdity, later to become apparent in his drawings and always evidenced by the quiet glee with which he greeted anything that appealed simultaneously to his sense of malice and his sense of fun. He had, in short, a deceptive strength of character.

He was not, in any case, left entirely to make his own way. His originality had been marked at College, together with his sense of design, his precociously assured craftsmanship and his sardonic humour, especially by Paul Nash, his tutor in design and the contemporary artist who influenced him more than any other. Nash introduced him, while he was still at College, to several people who were able to give him encouragement of a practical kind, notably the proprietors of the Curwen Press. He was also given a commission—one of greater importance than often comes the way of a mere student—to design an elaborate pictorial map for Wembley Exhibition, and immediately after leaving College he was commissioned to do two posters for the Underground.

It was, however, a couple of years later, at the end of 1928, that his first big commission came along, the one that first brought his name before the public. He was chosen, along with Eric Ravilious and Charles Mahoney, fellow-students with him at College, to decorate the walls of Morley College, Westminster Bridge Road. It was not a remunerative commission, but it provided plenty of scope for his energy and invention. The artists were given no fee, but all their materials were paid for, and they were each allowed one pound a day if at work, or ten shillings for half-a-day for as long as the work required. They gave all their time to it for a full year. The

results aroused a lot of interest. The freshness and gaiety of Bawden's and Ravilious's designs, sharp in detail, clean in colour, with an odd individual humour in their marionette-like figures, was a striking departure from the conventions of mural painting at that time. To-day we might think their style a trifle mannered, their conventions a trifle whimsical—this cannot now be judged, as they were utterly destroyed by a bomb in 1941—but the invention shown and the skill with which the work was done alone made it a *tour de force* as the work of inexperienced students.

It is not necessary to trace in detail Bawden's career as a designer following this success. He was able at least to earn a living doing drawings, posters, book illustrations, wallpapers and much else, eking it out with a certain amount of teaching. His work showed a remarkable feeling for pattern, and his best illustrations an unfailingly sure instinct for decorating the page of a book with designs that were relevant typographically and pictorially satisfactory at the same time. Among the people for whom he worked was Tom Laughton, hotel-keeper of Scarborough—brother of Charles Laughton the actor. Bawden's connection with him is important, because his visits to Scarborough crystallized in his mind a fondness for the Victorian scene, and especially for the Victorianism of the English watering-place, of which many boyhood holidays at Clacton-on-Sea

had laid the foundation. His sympathy for the Victorian period has coloured much of his work as a typographer and designer.

He taught design and book-illustration, first at Goldsmith's College under Clive Gardner, and later at the Royal College of Art itself. For him teaching was, fortunately, never the penance it is to many artists who are driven to it by economic necessity. Indeed, he found it stimulating, and when, at a later period, he was living in the remoteness of Essex, it was his weekly teaching visits to London that gave him his regular contact with a busier world. He is a very good teacher, and his influence on the present generation of young designers has been incalculable.

In his work as a draughtsman at this time, the early nineteen-thirties, his wit and humour come out strongly. In some advertisements he drew for the Westminster Bank, and more particularly in several famous series of advertisements for Shell, he developed his inimitable style, disarmingly simple, but in fact craftily unequivocal. It has often been compared with Edward Lear's. There is certainly a resemblance, but Bawden's drawings are far from being imitations of Lear's. It would be truer to say that a similar kind of pictorial shorthand has been produced by a similar attitude of mind, one compounded of fantasy, irony and shrewd observation of actuality—the latter in Bawden's case not unmixed with cruelty, for the

exuberant gestures of Lear's endearing and rather child-like personages are often replaced by a much more incisive summary of essential character.

This instinct for picking out essential attributes and recording them with obvious relish appears in Bawden's paintings as well as in his line drawings; notice, for example, in some of his farmyard paintings, the fowls of a horrid sprightliness. But to consider for the present only his drawings: of all contemporary drawings Bawden's are the most essentially humorous. Like Lear, he draws people, animals and objects as he does, because that is the aspect of people, animals and objects which appeals to him most strongly. The humour springs direct from the artist's viewpoint, not from a professed humorist's use of a comic formula.

It will be noticed that Bawden's output, as described above, shows him exclusively as designer and illustrator. Bawden the painter had not yet come to the fore. Although he had exhibited paintings, jointly with Eric Ravilious and D. P. Bliss, at the St. George's Gallery as early as 1926, he did not give much time to painting till his move from London to the country, and till he had there perfected his unique water-colour method, about which I shall have more to say later. His early work was in various media: oils, ink-line and wash, coloured inks, wax-tempera (like the Morley College decorations) and water-colour. It included a number of beach scenes with angular

figures of bathers, executed in a careful stippled technique, and, in wax-tempera, a very large picture of a flower show, one of the first paintings he did in Essex.

His move to the country is the next important event in Bawden's life—in fact it is the clue to the whole development of his subsequent career. Since leaving College he had continued to live in London, most of the time sharing lodgings in Earl's Court with Eric Ravilious, who was both his closest friend and the one artist of his own generation on whom he depended to any extent for criticism, and alongside whose mental development his own took place. It was jointly with Ravilious that, in 1932, he took over a red-brick Georgian house in the main street of Great Bardfield, only a few miles from his native town of Braintree, and there he soon began to paint industriously in water-colours, a medium in which Ravilious—always a precocious craftsman—was already well practised. His first Bardfield water-colours were done when the roof of the house was being mended, and he and Ravilious climbed the builder's ladders and sat astride the ridge drawing what they could see. Brick House, Great Bardfield, was at first only a rural lodging for weekends; in London, Bawden lived from 1932—when he married Charlotte Epton, also a fellow student at the Royal College—in a flat by the river at Hammersmith. But it was already clear that the

Essex countryside was his chosen *milieu*. He spent more and more of his time at Great Bardfield, and in 1935 made his home there altogether.

He soon made his mark as a painter. He held a very successful exhibition of his Essex water-colours at the Zwemmer Galleries in 1934, and subsequently divided his attention, working with his usual application and energy, between more painting, teaching in London and executing various commissions on which his living still, for the most part, depended. Henceforward he left Great Bardfield as seldom as possible; to be precise, for an occasional visit to Laughton in Scarborough, and for expeditions to Newhaven (with Eric Ravilious) in 1936, to Bath in 1937 and—rather unexpectedly—to Geneva in 1939. Apart from these short interludes, all his painting, over a period of nearly ten years, was done in Essex, mostly within a very short radius of Great Bardfield itself. His subjects were his own house and garden, the village street seen from his own windows, or the fields, farmyards and willow plantations adjoining. He seemed to be able to find inexhaustible fresh subjects as it were by the mere turning of his gaze in a new direction, or the shifting of its focus from the long perspective past the outhouses down his garden path to the close examination of an interesting vegetable growing near by.

Besides his garden and the brown-soiled Essex

landscape in which his imagination had been steeped since childhood, odd associations of objects always had an appeal for him. One of the most successful paintings of his first summer at Great Bardfield was of a derelict bow-windowed brougham, which he found in a farmer's yard and posed beneath a white-painted trellis-work arbour he had in his garden, crowned with a scarlet wooden soldier for a weather-vane.

Mention of his garden brings us to another and a new factor that now tied him even more firmly to Great Bardfield. He became the most enthusiastic, knowledgeable and painstaking of gardeners, despite that fact that he had shown no interest in gardening till he had one of his own to cultivate. His grandfather had been a game-keeper, so perhaps it was in his blood; in any case, he himself developed the passion rapidly. Characteristically, it brought with it a liking for peculiar plants and out-of-the-way garden lore, with a corresponding lack of interest in the conventional showmanship of the amateur gardener's herbaceous border. His garden, though neat, never aimed at being much to look at—except in detail. He grew things in it.

He also acquired a passion for collecting horticultural books. Herbals, early gardening textbooks, treatises by Regency romanticists on the Picturesque, fancifully embellished Victorian books on garden ornament, handbooks on the tasteful

decoration of churches with evergreens, or volumes with beautiful hand-coloured pictures on pomology: they all come within his range and at the same time aptly illustrate the combination of discriminating taste, period sense and relish for the rather odd that is most characteristic of his temperament and interests. His own drawings of plants and flowers—to be found in many of the books he has illustrated—show great sensitivity to their character and underlying rhythm.

After the middle nineteen-thirties, the fellow artist of whom he saw most was John Aldridge, also a fervent gardener who was now living at Great Bardfield. But Bawden had by now developed his notable self-reliance as an artist to the full. He was less dependent on Eric Ravilious's example and criticism, for this is the period which sees his spatial sense develop, in contrast to Ravilious's greater concentration on pattern and the rendering of the textures of the earth's surface and the things that lie about on it. Alongside this new ability to render volume in landscape, Bawden also developed a profound and personal sense of colour.

There is not a great deal more to be told about the factual side of Bawden's career. Although established as a painter, he continued to teach and to work as a designer. Some memorable work includes a display stand for the British Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exhibition, wall-paintings (illus-

trated here) for a club in Park Lane and the sets and costumes for a Sadler's Wells production of *The Tempest*, which for some reason were never used. At the beginning of 1938 he held his second show of paintings, this time at the Leicester Galleries, but in 1939 he did practically no painting and no commercial work; all his time was taken up with a new enterprise into which he threw all his energy and enthusiasm. This was the production, jointly with John Aldridge, of an ambitious series of designs for wallpapers, which were to be commercially manufactured and marketed, but printed from linoleum blocks cut by the two artists themselves. Bawden and Aldridge not only worked out a large number of remarkable designs and cut the intricate sets of blocks needed for printing in several colours, but themselves printed off the first pieces. It was a tedious task, involving months of work, performed in an attic at Brick House. It also involved quite considerable physical labour, but Bawden's willingness to undertake this is in keeping with his craftsman's instinct for retaining as much as possible of any productive process within the control of his own hands. The same instinct, perhaps, underlies the satisfaction such an artist as Bawden finds in gardening.

This wallpaper enterprise bore no fruit. The first specimen pieces had only just been exhibited when war came and production was shelved.

Wallpaper design might otherwise have been raised by Bawden's and Aldridge's example once more to the status of an art worth the attention of intelligent decorators and designers, instead of one so debased as to be classed, along with modern stained glass, among the æsthetic untouchables. Whether this would have compensated for the temporary retirement of Bawden from painting is a matter about which some of his admirers had already become uneasy.

But the war brought him back to painting. He was one of the first official War Artists appointed, and was attached to the British Army in France along with Barnett Freedman and Edward Ardizzone. He produced a number of sensitive drawings of army scenes and characters—mostly in pen and wash—as he followed the movements of the B.E.F. forth and back throughout that uneasy spring of 1940. When disaster came he stayed to illustrate it, and some of his best drawings of this period were made in the battered harbour of Dunkirk. He got back to England safely and, a few months later, was off again to the Middle East to attach himself to the army there. The work he did in the Middle East became progressively more powerful and imaginative, less rigid and geometrical. I have already referred to it, at the beginning of this essay, as giving him an entirely new standing among contemporary artists.

It may or may not be significant that he had often shown a vague, entirely theoretical, interest in the East, not the authentic East of swarming, primitive humanity and civilizations remote from our own, but the Europeanized East, where the satirist can watch the white man's foibles thrown into relief by his isolated dignity. Holman Hunt went to Palestine in search of the reality he thought was becoming submerged beneath the complacency and sophistication of Victorian England, but Bawden may well have realized that Victorian England itself lingered where the white man still carried his self-imposed burden. When he reached the East, he did indeed find sufficient period flavour on which to focus his observant and satirical eye—he has never delineated Victorian architecture more sensitively and revealingly than in his drawing of Menelik's palace at Addis Ababa—but he also found a great deal more: richly coloured landscapes with a juxtaposition of fantasy and sombre reality that gave him new scope as a topographical painter. As well as humour, there was poetry, accessible to whoever had the vision to apprehend it and the ability to interpret it. It is significant, also, that when he had made himself at home in this new, self-contained world, portraiture found a place in his work for the first time. Single heads and groups of Arab sheikhs, and Sudanese and other native troops are an important part of his work from the Middle East.

Figures had previously appeared in some of his landscapes, but as furniture, not as interpretations of personality.

On his first visit Bawden stayed in the Middle East two years, a long time to be living a nomadic life; laid low at intervals by fever. He painted in Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. He set off again for home in the late summer, 1942, but after the usual two months' sea voyage round the Cape he was torpedoed in the South Atlantic—losing in the adventure all his own clothes, a collection of fezes and other Eastern headgear he was bringing back to England, and a number of his most recently completed paintings—rescued by a Vichy French warship after five days in an open boat, interned at Casablanca and released two months later when North Africa was invaded and Casablanca captured by American troops.

So much for the salient points of Bawden's career. Can we now summarize the salient qualities of his art? Enough has already been said about his illustrations and designs. Admirable and inimitable though they are, it is as a painter that he takes his place in this series of books. I have mentioned the distinction of his colour. Its quality is difficult to define; it is much more than local colour, yet by no means a mere impressionist rendering of the optical effect of colour. It often charges the whole of his landscapes with their

rather eerie significance. But more profitable than to try to define its quality is to see how its richness is obtained. This results from no less an achievement than the invention of a new painting method, for Bawden's paintings are water-colours only in a general sense. For one thing, he paints on what is known as "lettering paper", a paper with a non-absorbent surface which would normally be considered quite unsuitable for the laying on of washes. The result is that the washes float on it instead of settling into it—one wash superimposed on another, with the colour of each playing its part. Thus he obtains both richness and depth of colour, but that is only the beginning of the process. The washes having been laid, they are as often as not scored and drawn upon, and the pigment lying on the surface scratched away, both to produce a luminous texture and to get full value from the underlying colour.

This very individual way of using water-colour is, of course, dependent on Bawden's manual skill. It is not a method that lends itself to second thoughts. But he has always had marvellous control; he has the steadiest hand conceivable, and always works directly, whether with brush or pen, marking the paper without any hesitation. He is sufficiently master of all the artist's crafts to employ them as his ingenuity suggests, as when he mixes his media with complete conviction and effectiveness. Notice in many of the war paint-

ings his skilful use of the pen along with the brush, and his practice of drawing with crayon on top of paint. An instance of his inventiveness and unorthodoxy is his use of heel-ball. He applies it direct to the paper and then wets it and presses it with a hot iron over a sheet of blotting-paper, which absorbs the wax and leaves a matt surface. This technique has been used, along with water-colour, in many of his portrait drawings and in the picture of Menelik's palace, reproduced here.

In inventing new techniques, he invents spontaneously, as the needs of the occasion demand. It is the opposite course to that of the artist who invents a style or technique in the abstract and then casts about for ways to exploit it. Bawden lets the need suggest the means, and never repeats a successful effect for the sake of doing so. Like all good craftsmen, when at work he is as neat and methodical as a surgeon in the operating theatre; his instruments arranged in regular order beside his work-table.

Another instance of his virtuosity is the result he obtains with linoleum blocks. The lino-cut is generally thought to be an insensitive medium, lending itself only to crude effects. But Bawden has made it do wonders, achieving surprising intricacy of detail and printing beautiful gradations of texture from its reputedly dead surface. His best posters, including those reproduced in this book, his design for a schoolroom picture, also

reproduced, and nearly all his book-jackets were built up from a series of lino-cuts, mounted and superimposed for colour printing. In most cases the actual reproduction was done lithographically. Finally, another aspect of Bawden's pride in craftsmanship is seen in his habit of ruthless self-criticism. For one drawing that appears from his pen or brush, the product of apparent fluency and ease, a dozen versions may have been worked upon and destroyed.

Many of the characteristics of Bawden's art were exemplified in his own house at Great Bardfield, especially in the way his impeccable taste was yet suffused with originality; nothing was inelegant, yet the whole had none of the preciousness of the museum piece. Early Victorian furniture was invested with an odd contemporary validity, and formed a setting so precise as well as personal that it might have been contrived as a demonstration of the fact that the artist's freedom from convention need not lead to the squalor of Bohemianism.

I said that it was essential to know something about Bawden's career in order to understand his qualities as a painter, and now it should be clear why. He is different from other painters because he was trained as a designer. This does not only mean that organization and a strong sense of rhythm are present in his work; it means that his whole emotional approach is different—in fact it

means that there is no effort to interpret emotion immediately in paint, in the way the painter brought up in the ivory tower of self-expression aims at doing. His work is not impulsive. Instead, all his pictures, however moving and significant in the end, are the product of study. Their vitality is intensified, not by a strong emotional urgency, but by being passed, as it were, through the tempering process of an exacting technique. Some of his greatest successes spring direct from his handling of what are primarily technical problems, which he often seems to go out of his way to set himself, as in the case of his fondness for painting direct into the sun—though his choice of this viewpoint is probably inspired also by his interest in analysing the sombre colour combinations it often produces.

Perhaps it is this absence of emotional impulsiveness that causes him to look at everything with exactly the same detached regard, his ability to do which, as I have said, enabled him to rise so powerfully to the occasion when translated from the placidity of Essex to the raw strangeness of the Middle East. His is a queer vision; at its queerest, perhaps, in his sardonic attitude to his fellow human beings, exemplified in the beetle-like creatures with which so many of his drawings are inhabited. In his paintings it shows itself vividly sensitive to the overtones of atmosphere concealed in the recesses of a landscape, and brought out in

some magical way while he appears to concentrate on the means more intently than the ends. It is the same vision whether applied to the fields

of Essex or a desert encampment at Asmara, and it endows all ordinary things with a simultaneous touch of poetry and peculiarity.

J. M. Richards



PLATE 1. CATHOLIC CHURCH AT ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA. 1941



PLATE 2. ST. GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL, ADDIS ABABA. 1941



PLATE 3. DERELICT CAB. 1933



PLATE 4. SHAIKH HAJI FARHUD AL-FANDI, IRAQ. 1944



PLATE 5. LITTLE SAMPFORD CHURCH. 1933



PLATE 6. A CREEK SCENE IN SHAIKH HAJI FARHUD'S SECTION OF THE HATCHAM TRIBE, IRAQ. 1944



PLATE 7. NEWHAVEN HARBOUR. 1936



PLATE 8. INTERIOR OF SHAIKH MUZHIR AL-GASSID'S MUDHIF, IRAQ. 1944



PLATE 9. NEAR WETHERSFIELD



PLATE 10. SHAIKH HAJI MAQTUF AND ONE OF HIS BROTHERS, IRAQ. 1944



PLATE 11. FEBRUARY, 2 P.M. 1936



PLATE 12. ENTRANCE TO THE CARPET-SELLERS' BAZAAR AT BAGHDAD. 1943



PLATE 13. CORNFIELD. 1937



PLATE 14. A STREET IN JIDDA, SAUDI ARABIA. 1944



PLATE 15. ESSEX LANDSCAPE. 1936



PLATE 16. THE CAMEL MARKET AND THE RUINS OF THE PALACE OF IBN RASCHID AT HAIL, SAUDI ARABIA. 1944



PLATE 17. SUDAN DEFENCE FORCE, TRAINING CENTRE, OMDURMAN. 1940



PLATE 18. SALEM AND HIS SON ABDULLAH, HAIL, SAUDI ARABIA. 1944



PLATE 19. AT GALLABAT ON THE SUDAN-ETHIOPIAN BORDER. GUNS FIRING ON METEMMA. 1940



PLATE 20. RESCUED BRITISH SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN AND MERCHANT SEAMEN ON THE FRENCH WARSHIP "GLOIRE." 1943



PLATE 21. GUBBA, THE SUDAN. A BURNT TUKL IN THE DEVASTATED VILLAGE. 1941



PLATE 22. SGT. BAITISI, BECHUANA PIONEER COY., LEBANON. 1942

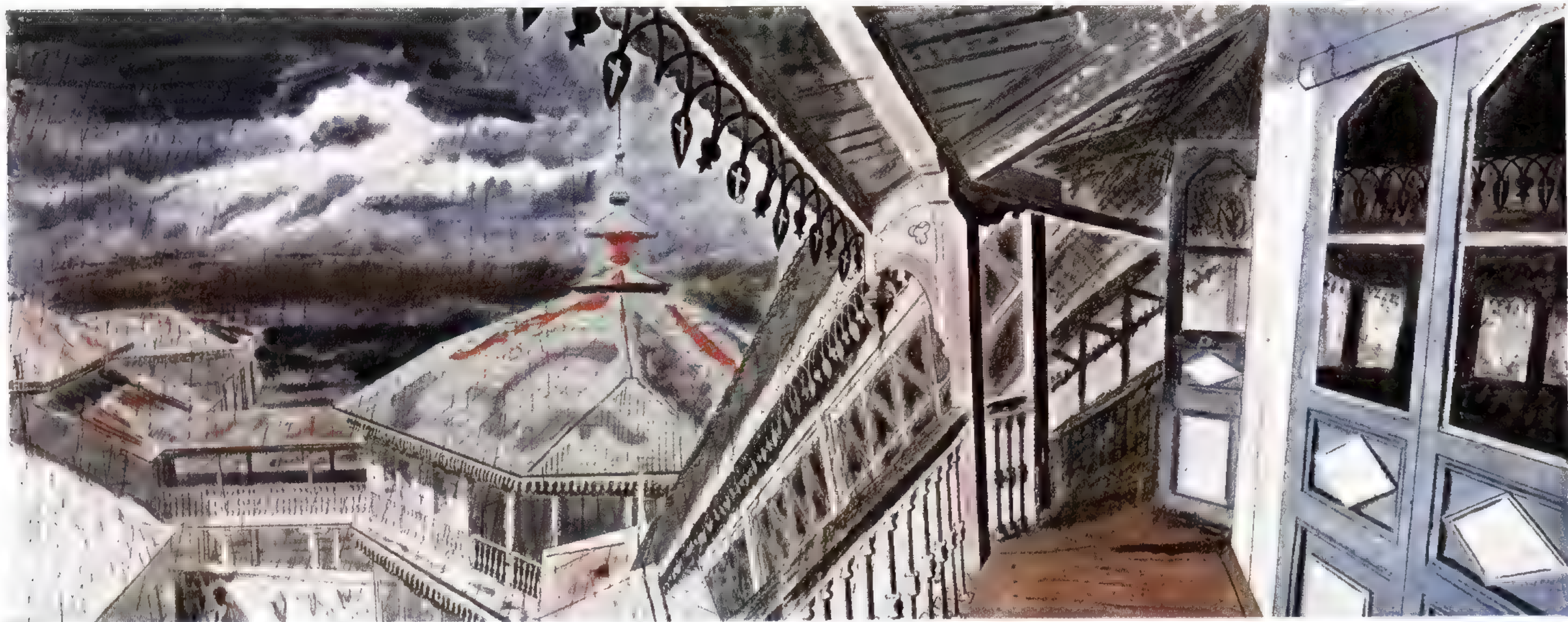


PLATE 23. THE PALACE OF THE EMPEROR MENELIK (THE OLD GEBBI), AT ADDIS ABABA. 1941



PLATE 24. PTE. G. F. DUNNING, R.A.S.C. COLCHESTER. 1943



PLATE 25. BENGASI. SUNKEN SHIPPING IN THE HARBOUR. 1942



PLATE 26. PTE. R. WYARD, R.A.M.C. COLCHESTER. 1943

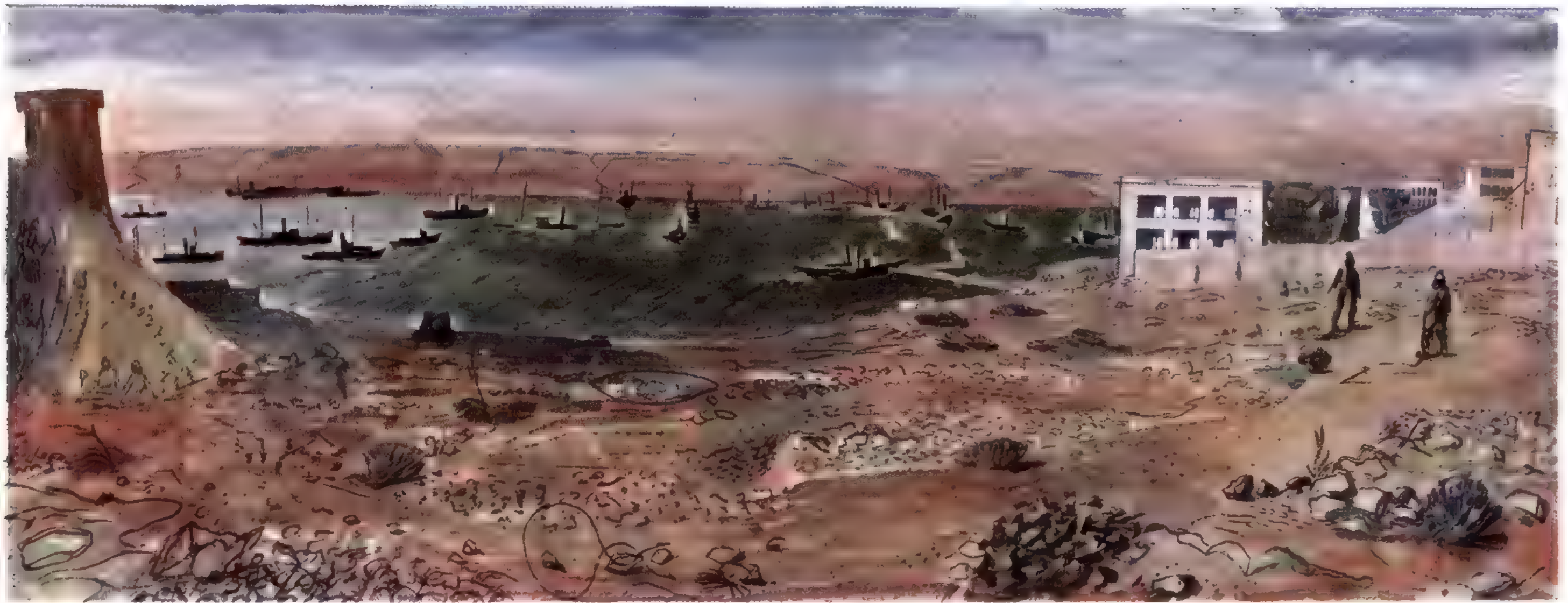


PLATE 27. TOBRUK. THE HARBOUR. 1942



PLATE 28. HASSAN MIRZA. BAGHDAD. 1943

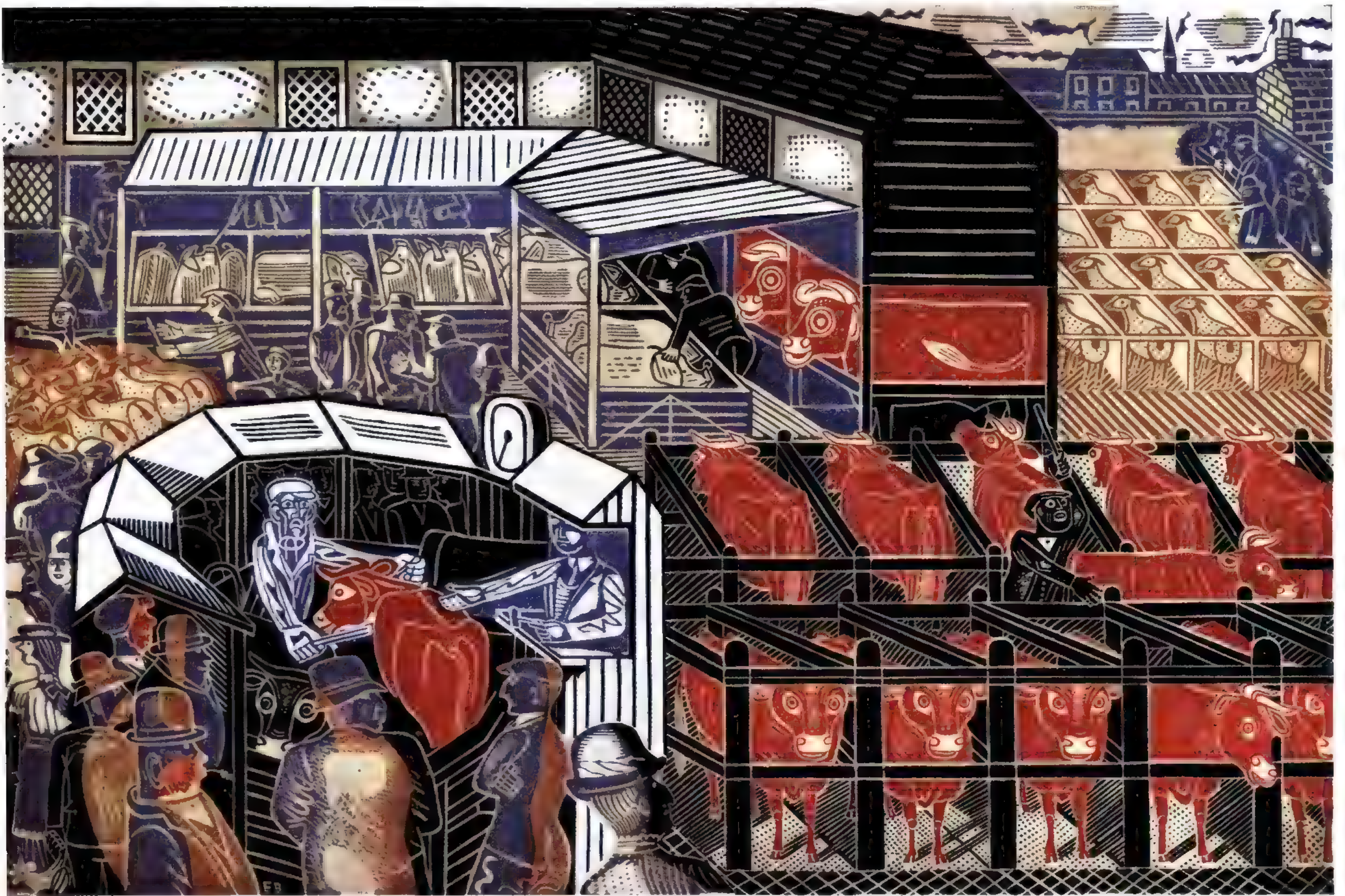


PLATE 29. CATTLE MARKET, BRAINTREE. 1937



PLATE 30. DECORATION FOR THE DINING ROOM, INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CLUB. 1937

KEW GARDENS STATION



OPEN DAILY, ADMISSION 1^D
TUESDAYS & FRIDAYS (STUDENTS DAYS) 6^D

KEW GARDENS

PLATE 31. UNDERGROUND POSTER. 1937



PLATE 32. YUSIF HAIM SHAMELL. BAGHDAD. 1943



THREE SHILLINGS
AND SIXPENCE